

Letter from Mary S. Breckinridge to Alexander Graham Bell, August 8, 1909

MARY S. BRECKINRIDGE 8 The Navarre Gilbert and Yale Avenues Cincinnati, Ohio
August 8th, 1909. Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, Bienn Breagh, Near Baddeck, Nova Scotia.
Dear Dr. Bell:—

I am mailing a copy of this little article to you and another to Mt. Booth, thinking it might be of interest to you both and possibly suitable for the visible speech department of the Review. Tho' I have used the symbols with many deaf children I had never before tried them with a child who was too immature for any other form of written work, or one with a distinct case of stammering. I was amazed and more than delighted at the rapidity and ease with which she grasped the ideas of the symbols.

The reverence I have long felt for your father's work is constantly increasing as I realize more fully the greatness of his teaching and the value of Visible Speech.

With best wishes for you and Mrs. Bell, to whom please give my kindest regards, I am,

Yours very sincerely, Mary S. Breckinridge

JANE AND THE SYMBOLS. A Case of Speech-Hesitation.

Jane, a little more than five years old, had at intervals for nearly a year had difficulty in speaking. Three months ago training was begun to correct her defects. Her breathing was insufficient and almost entirely abdominal, her chest depressed, at frequent intervals when speaking a spasmodic contraction occurred in and around the larynx, and her tongue pressed against the hard palate, and her lips twisted and clung together, making most of the consonants very imperfect. It was with great difficulty that she gave

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p,b,m,t,d,n,l,r,k,g,ng,ch,j,x and qu alone or at the beginning of words, and she frequently gave an indefinite vocal sound between words.

To arouse her interest in articulation work I drew an outline of her face in profile on the board, and showed her how, by altering lines, the lips assumed varying positions.. She first followed my suggestions regarding positions, and then made suggestions for new positions of the lips and tongue. As soon as the vocal organs and diagram had become clearly connected I wrote the visible speech symbols for the sounds, symbolizing her speech, with its errors, and showing how, by gentler contact she could eliminate the defects. Tho' we spent only a few minutes a day on this work, within a month she read the symbols for all the consonant and vowel sounds and thoroughly enjoyed the work.

The use of the descriptions of the symbols has been invaluable when it has not been convenient to give the written form. If the sound of K was given too far forward and the position held, the tension could always be relaxed by my saying "Breathe in", and then "Back shut, breath" brought the sound we wanted

After three months work her hesitation has been reduced to a slight pause occasionally before p,t,k,b,d,or g, and we have reason to believe that she will soon overcome that slight defect.

The lessons have been divided into periods of a few minutes each for breathing exercises, reading visible speech, recitation of nursery rhymes and conversation, but the reading of the symbols is the part Jane enjoyed the most, and their use has so interested her that she is eager to begin systematic school work, and she has so improved in nerve force and in concentration of attention that we feel she will be able to hold her own in class work.